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ABSTRACT

In this investigation of the effects of maternal employment on adolescents, 88 male and 128 female adolescents from grades 7 through 12 completed the Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory and the Inventory of Psychosocial Development. Several questions were addressed: (1) Does maternal employment status influence adolescents' perceptions of child rearing? (2) Does maternal employment influence adjustment as a function of perceptions of mothers' or fathers' perceived child rearing? and (3) Does maternal employment influence perceptions of child rearing and adjustment differentially across age or sex? Findings revealed that maternal employment was not related to adjustment, either directly or in interaction with perceptions of maternal or paternal child rearing practices. Maternal employment interacted with developmental level in perceptions of child rearing. Parents were perceived by adolescents in grades 7 and 8 as being more accepting when mother did not work or worked only part-time; the same perception was held by adolescents in grades 9 and 10 when mother did not work, and by those in grades 11 and 12 when mother worked full-time. The same trend was found for perceptions of parents allowing psychological autonomy. Higher perceived acceptance and lower perceived use of psychological control by both parents were related to better adjustment among adolescents. (RH)

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Maternal Employment and Adolescent Adjustment and Perceptions of Child Rearing

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Maternal Employment and Adolescent Adjustment and Perceptions of Child Rearing

Abstract

A total of 216 (88 males and 128 females) adolescents from grades 7-12, whose mothers worked full-time, part-time, or not at all, completed both the Childrens Report of Parental Behavior Inventory and the Inventory of Psychosocial Development. Maternal employment was not related to adjustment, either directly or in interaction with perceptions of maternal or paternal child rearing practices. Maternal employment interacted with developmental level in perceptions of child rearing. Adolecents in grades 7 and 8 perceived their parents as more accepting when mother did not work or worked only part-time, those in grades 9 and 10 when mother did not work, and those in grades 11 and 12 when mother worked full-time. The same trend was found for perceptions of parents allowing psychological autonomy. Higher perceived acceptance and lower perceived use of psychological control by both parents were related to better adjustment.

Maternal Employment and Adolescent Adjustment and Perceptions of Child Rearing

Current estimates are that over 60% of American mothers of school age children work outside the home (cf. Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Hoffman, 1980). As a result, it has become the norm for children and adolescents to grow-up in families in which the mother works outside the home. Given the extent of this change from previous generations, psychologists increasingly have studied the potential of maternal employment to impact positively or negatively on child and adolecent psychological adjustment.

Research on the impact of maternal employment on children's general development and adjustment has revealed several well-documented findings. For example, it appears that maternal employment during the childhood years has beneficial effects on girls but detrimental effects on boys (cf. Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Hoffman, 1980). Hence, the daughters of working mothers develop more positive views of the female sex role, are more independent, may be more career and achievement oriented, and tend to admire their mother more (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Hoffman, 1979, 1980; Tangri, 1969). These benefits to the daughters of working mothers generally are attributed to the mother providing a model of achievement, of less restricted sex-roles, and of competency outside the home.

The picture for the male children of working mothers is less positive. At least in the middle class family, maternal employment during the boy's preschool and early school years appears to be detrimental to school achievement (e.g., Gold & Andres, 1978b, 1978c; Hoffman, 1980), and may negatively influence later occupational plans. In the lower social classes sons of working mothers admire their fathers less (cf. Hoffman, 1979). Hoffman attributes this latter finding to social class differences in the perception of the father's competency and to added strain in the father-son relationship in lower social class families.

Despite the abundance of research on maternal employment effects that has considered influences on children, substantially less has been concerned with maternal employment effects on adolescents (cf. Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Montemayor & Clayton, 1983). One of the most well designed studies of the impact of maternal employment on adolescent development was conducted by Gold and Andres (1978a). They compared the performance of adolescents of working and nonworking mothers on achievement tests, academic grades, attitudes toward school, and educational aspirations. No significant differences were found between the two groups on any of these measures. The divergence in findings for children and for adolescents points to the importance of studying maternal employment effects on adolescents.

In the present study we took the perspective that maternal

employment is a moderating variable imbedded in a host of other characteristics, such as child rearing techniques of both mother and father, that have the potential to influence offspring's adjustment. For example, if adolescents whose mothers work perceive their parents as using different child rearing techniques than adolescents whose mothers do not work, maternal employment could relate to adjustment because perceptions of child rearing are related to adjustment (e.g., Adams & Jones, 1982; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Ziegler & Dusek, 1985). Hence, perceptions of mother's and father's child rearing may be a major mediating variable for the influence of maternal employment on adolescent adjustment.

In the present study, adolescents in grades 7-12 completed Schaefer's (1965) Childrens Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) and Constantinople's (1969) Inventory of Psychosocial Development (IPD). The CRPBI asseses percpetions of child rearing for each parent on three dimensions. Acceptance vs. Rejection (A/R; high score = acceptance and warmth) reflects perceptions of the degree to which the parents are accepting and warm vs. rejecting and cold. Psychological Autonomy vs. Psychological Control (A/C; high score = psychological control) reflects perceptions of parental use of psychological means (e.g., anxiety, guilt) of controlling the adolescent's behavior. The Firm Control vs. Lax Control (F/L; high score = lax control) dimension reflects the degree to which the parents are perceived as making and strictly enforcing rules and limits.

The IPD assesses resolution of Erikson's (1959, 1963, 1968) first six stages of psychosocial development. According to Erikson, adjustment entails the resolutin of a series of developmental crises, e.g., identity vs. identity diffusion. Because some of the crises are particularly important to the adolescent stage of development this instrument is particularly relevant to the study of adjustment during adolescence. Use of this instrument, then, allowed us to relate perceptions of maternal and paternal child rearing techniques to adjustment.

Reviewers (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Hoffman, 1980) have noted that the majority of research on maternal employment influences on adjustment have considered only working vs. nonworking mothers. They have omitted the large group of part-time working mothers in their samples. In the present study we included adolescents whose mothers worked part-time.

Several questions were addressed. First, does maternal employment status influence adolescent's perceptions of child rearing? Second, does maternal employment influence adjustment as a function of perceptions of mother's or father's perceived child-rearing? Finally, does maternal employment influence perceptions of child-rearing and adjustment differentially across age or for males and females?

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 88 males and 128 females, grades 7-12, in intact families. Because the number of subjects in each grade-sex combination was small, subjects in adjacent grade levels were combined to produce three groups: Group 8 (grades 7 and 8, mean CA = 13.3 yrs.), Group 10 (grades 9 and 10, mean CA = 15.3 yrs.), and Group 12, (Grades 11 and 12, mean CA = 17.3 yrs.). There were 26 males and 58 females with full-time employed mothers, 28 males and 31 females with part-time employed mothers, and 34 males and 39 females whose mothers did not work outside the home.

Instruments

The 56 item form of the Childrens Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (Margolies & Weintraub, 1977) developed by Schaefer (1965) was used to measure perceptions of parental child-rearing. Scores from this version correlate very highly with scores from the much longer versions (Burger & Armentrout, 1971), and test-retest coefficients are quite suitable (Margolies & Weintraub, 1977).

The 56 items, completed once for each parent, consist of statements describing some aspect of parental behavior (e.g., "makes me feel better after talking over my worries with him (her)"). The subject circles on the answer sheet whether this is "like," "somewhat like," or "not like" (scored 3, 2, and 1, respectively) the parent. Scores are derived for the Acceptance vs. Rejection (A/R), Psychological Autonomy vs. Psychological Control (A/C), and Firm Control vs. Lax Control (F/L) dimensions for each parent by summing appropriate item scores. High scores on the scales represent, respectively, acceptance and warmth, a high use of psychological control such as anxiety and guilt, and lax control as evidenced by inconsistent enforcement of rules.

Constantinople's (1969) Inventory of Psychosocial Development (IPD) was used to assess adjustment, as indexed by resolution of Erikson's (1959, 1963, 1968) first six psychosocial crises. The IPD consists of 5 items reflecting successful and 5 items reflecting unsuccessful resolution of each of Erikson's first six crises. Each subscale has very suitable test-retest reliability and internal consistency, and suitably low correlations with measures of social desirability (cf. Waterman & Whitbourne, 1981). Subjects indicate on a 7-point scale the degree to which each item characterizes them. The score for each crisis is the difference between the scores for the successful and unsuccessful resolutions. The difference scores range from 30 to -30, with higher scores indicating greater adjustment.

The school district in which the study was conducted requested that three items, all from the Initiative vs. Guilt crisis and dealing with some aspect of sexuality, be omitted from the questionnaire. Rather than use one of the various estimation techniques to derive a score for the Initiative vs. Guilt crisis, it was decided to not analyze those data.

Procedure

All students completed the questionnaire individually in small groups. For half the subjects the order was CRPBI for father, IPD, and CRPBI for mother. For half the reverse order was used. Subjects indicated on the cover sheet whether their mother worked and, if she did, whether it was full-time or part-time.

Results

The data were analyzed in three steps. First, the CRPBI scores were analyzed to determine if maternal employment status influenced perceptions of child rearing. Second, the adjustment scores from the IPD were analyzed to determine if maternal employment influenced psychosocial development. Finally, the adjustment scores were analyzed to determine if the interactive effects of perceptions of child rearing and maternal employment influenced adjustment.

Maternal Employment and Perceptions of Child Rearing

The 6 CRPBI scores were entered into a 3 (Group) x 2 (Sex) x 3 (Maternal Employment) x 2 (Parent) x 3 (CRPBI dimension) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last two factors.

The main effect due to CRPBI dimension, F (2, 396) = 1124.80, $p < .001$, and the Group x CRPBI dimension interaction, F (4, 396) = 4.54, $p < .001$, were statistically significant. As may be seen in Table 1 (combined mean), the adolescents generally viewed their parents higher on the A/R than on the A/C or F/L dimensions of the CRPBI.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Adolescents in Group 8 perceived their parents as more accepting than did adolescent6s in Groups 10 or 12. There were no significant differences on the A/C or F/L dimensions.

The Group x Maternal Employment x CRPBI interaction was significant, F (8, 396) = 215, $p < .05$. As may be seen in Table 1, Group 8 adolescents viewed their parents as more accepting when mother did not work or when she worked only part-time, Group 10 adolescents when she was nonemployed, and Group 12 adolescents when she worked full-time. The identical trend was found for the A/C dimension. The interaction is due to responses to the F/L dimension. Adolescents in Groups 8 and 10 whose mothers worked part-time and adolescents in Group 12 whose mothers worked full-time, had lower lax control scores.

The means for the Parent x CRPBI effect, F (2, 396 = 6.61, $p < .01$, are presented in Table 2 (Mean). Mothers were perceived as more accepting and as using more psychological control than were fathers.

Insert Table 2 About Here

The means for the significant Sex x Parent x CRPBI interaction, F (2, 396) = 4.54, $p < .01$, are presented in Table 2. The males and females viewed their mothers as equally accepting, but males viewed their fathers as more accepting than did females. Males viewed both their mothers and fathers as using more psychological control, and males viewed their mothers as being more lax in control, than did females.

Maternal Employment and Adjustment

Each IPD difference score was subjected to a 3 (Group) x 2 (Sex) x 3 (Maternal Employment) ANOVA. The only significant effect was the triple interaction in the analysis of the Trust-Mistrust score. Examination of the means led to no meaningful interpretation.

Maternal Employment, Perceptions of Child Rearing, and Adjustment

To investigate the mediating role of perceptions of child rearing in maternal employment effects on adjustment we employed a strategy that would allow us to assess the contributions of perceptions of child rearing for both parents jointly. We classified each subject as below or above the median score on each CRPBI scale for each parent. The IPD difference scores then were subjected to a 3 (Group) x 2 (Sex) x 3 (Maternal Employment) x 4 (CRPBI Group) ANOVA, in which CRPBI Group was defined by the combination of perceptions of child rearing on a single CRPBI dimension for mother and father. Hence, in one analysis CRPBI dimension was defined as high or low A/R for mother and high or low A/R for father, the subjects being divided into these 4 groups. A similar procedure was followed for the other two CRPBI dimensions. Because we previously reported main effects due to Group, Sex, and Maternal Employment, only the main and interactive effects involving CRPBI Group are of interest.

Acceptance/Rejection. The main effect due to CRPBI Group was significant for Trust-Mistrust, F (3, 153) = 5.48, $p < .001$, Industry-Inferiority, F (3, 153) = 4.73, $p < .01$, Identity-Identity Diffusion, F (3, 153), = 3.05, $p < .05$, and Intimacy-Isolation, F (3, 153) = 5.43, $p < .001$. In each instance the high-high combination of perceptions of child rearing had the higher adjustment scores (Table 3). In addition, when perceived maternal acceptance was low, scores tended to be lower whether or not perceived paternal acceptance was high or low.

Insert Table 3 About Here

The Sex x CRPBI Group interaction was significant for the Autonomy-Shame and Doubt score, F (3, 153) = 2.73, $p < .05$ (Table 4). Males who perceived their fathers as less accepting had higher adjustment scores, perhaps because their fathers were less intrusive and, therefore, promoted feelings of autonomy. Females who perceived their mothers as more highly accepting and warm had

higher adjustment scores, perhaps because autonomy for girls involves learning the female sex role, which involves nurturance and warmth, two aspects of acceptance.

Insert Table 4 About Here

Psychological Autonomy/Psychological Control. The main effect due to CRPBI Group was significant for the Trust-Mistrust, F (3, 151) = 4.71, $p < .01$, Industry-Inferiority, F (3, 151) = 7.44, $p < .001$, and Identity-Identity Diffusion, F (3, 151) = 3.01, $p < .05$, scores. Perceiving the parents as using less psychological control was related to better adjustment (Table 5). Poorer adjustment was associated with either parent being perceived as using high levels of psychological control.

Insert Table 5 About Here

For the Autonomy-Shame and Doubt score the Sex x CRPBI Group interaction was significant, F (3, 151) = 3.60, $p < .01$. Boys who perceived either parent as low on the A/C dimension had higher adjustment scores (Table 6). Females had higher adjustment scores only when both parents were perceived as low on this dimension.

Insert Table 6 About Here

Firm Control/Lax Control. No effects were statistically significant.

Discussion

As expected on the basis of earlier research (e.g., Litovsky & Dusek, 1985; Ziegler & Dusek, 1985), younger adolescents perceived their parents as more accepting than did older adolescents. The greater independence strivings of older adolescents (e.g., Hill, 1980) may cause them to perceive parental behaviors associated with attention and warmth as being stifling and intrusive.

More interestingly, perceptions of child rearing varied as a function of Group and Maternal Employment Status. The trends in means indicate differences in perceptions of child rearing that are most readily explained by considering both the needs of the developing adolescent and the home (family) circumstances in dual-working-parent families. Briefly, younger adolescents may perceive the parents as more accepting when mother works only part-time or not at all because they require greater parental contact and less autonomy than older adolescents (Hill, 1980). Older adolescents, who have stronger independence strivings and who have developed greater independence from the parents may find parents more accepting when they allow more freedom and independence, as occurs when both parents are working full time

(e.g., Hoffman, 1979; Hill, 1980).

A parallel argument can be made for perceptions on the A/C dimension of child rearing. The youngest adolescents perceived their parents as using more psychological control when mother worked full time and as allowing greater psychological autonomy when she worked only part time or not at all. In contrast, the older adolescents perceived the parents as using less psychological control when mother worked full time.

Finally, the older adolescents perceived their parents as using more firm control when mother worked full time, while that was true for younger adolescents when mother worked either full- or part-time. When both parents work they apparently are perceived as making and enforcing more rules than when mother does not work, and they do so in a manner that seems to reflect the adolescent's developmental level.

Hoffman (1974, 1979) has argued that families in which both parents work may be especially conducive to meeting the adolescent's need for developing autonomy because they are better able to relinquish tasks that promote the developing of autonomy and competence (cf. Hill, 1980). When mother is home it may be more difficult to do so because a substantial component of mother's self-worth revolves around family care (Hoffman, 1979), the giving up of which could damage her own feelings of self-worth. Indeed, Hoffman (1974, 1979) notes that out of necessity employed mothers more actively foster adolescent independence training. These findings, then, point to the positive baenefits to the adolescent when mother works, largely through family context conditions that allow the development of self-reliance (cf. Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Montemayor & Clayton, 1983).

Maternal employment did not relate to adjustment as either a main or interactive effect. This finding is consistent with the above interpretation of the infuence of maternal employment on perceptions of child rearing. If maternal employment promotes the indeendence and achievement strivings of the developing adolescent, as appears is the case, then maternal employment should not adversely influence development through Erikson's crises. In fact, this is what occurred. These findings add to the literature (cf. Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982) indicating that maternal employment does not relate negatively to adjustment during the adolescent years, despite the trends for a negative influence during the childhood years.

Perceptions of child rearing on the A/R and A/C dimensions, then, related to adjustment as expected. The highest adjustment was found when adolescents perceived both the parents as highly accepting and when they perceived both parents as low in the use of psychological control. Perceptions of child rearing on the F/L dimension did not relate to adjustment.

Perceptions of mother's and of father's child rearing differentially influenced crisis resolution. Perceptions of maternal acceptance are more important than those of father acceptance for resolution of the TRMT, IDDIF, and INTIS crises. Whenever mother is perceived as high (low) in acceptance the crisis resolution is more positive (negative) regardless of level of perception of father acceptance. For the ININF crisis, perception of father as highly accepting seems more important than perception of mother as more accepting. This may be due to the highly instrumental nature of the crisis (Marcia, 1980). Because the father is more likely to express the instrumental role, acceptance by father may be more important.

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Table 1
Mean CRPBI Scores for Each Group x Maternal Employment Comtination

CRPBI	Maternal Employment	Group 8	10	12
A/R	Full-time	37.86	35.59	38.99
	Part-time	40.14	35.00	34.31
	Nonemployed	40.92	38.04	34.70
	(Combined Mean)	39.66	36.19	36.34
A/C	Full-time	26.38	25.92	23.06
	Part-time	25.64	25.98	27.00
	Nonemployed	25.25	24.72	25.71
	(Combined Mean)	25.75	25.57	24.98
F/L	Full-time	26.72	26.28	26.44
	Part-time	25.07	25.62	27.94
	Nonemployed	27.33	26.10	27.82
	(Combined Mean)	26.75	26.05	27.29

Note: Higher scores reflect perceptions of greater acceptance (A/R), greater use of psychological control (A/C), and more lax control (F/L).

Table 2
Mean CRPBI Scores for Each Parent for Males and Females

Sex	CRPBI					
	Mother			Father		
	A/R	A/C	F/L	A/R	A/C	F/L
Male	38.30	26.88	27.89	37.29	26.75	26.32
Female	38.58	25.52	25.91	53.77	23.58	26.51
(Mean)	38.47	26.07	26.72	36.43	24.87	26.43

Note: Higher scores reflect perceptions of greater acceptance (A/R), greater use of psychological control (A/C), and more lax control (F/L).

Table 3
Mean Adjustment Scores for Each A/R CRPBI Group

Score	Group 1	2	3	4
TRMT	10.93	7.28	5.61	5.78
ININF	11.74	6.78	8.61	4.10
IDDIF	8.48	6.62	4.64	4.42
INTIS	15.34	11.62	10.03	10.23

Note: TRMT=Trust-Mistrust, ININF=Industry-Inferiority, IDDIF=Identity-Identity Diffusion, INTIS=Intimacy-Isolation. Group1=both parents high, Group2=mother high, father low, Group3=father high, mother low, Group4=both parents low.

Table 4
Mean Autonomy/Shame Scores for Each Sex and A/R CRPBI Group

Sex	Group 1	2	3	4
Male	6.82	9.91	4.86	7.79
Female	6.78	5.33	7.65	5.80

Note: Group1=both parents high, Group 2=mother high, father low, Group3=father high, mother low, Group 4=both parents low.

Table 5
Mean Adjustment Scores for Each A/C Group

Score	Group 1	2	3	4
TRMT	6.23	6.53	6.54	11.77
ININF	5.25	6.86	6.11	13.52
IDDIF	5.20	5.33	5.22	9.02

Note: TRMT=Trust-Mistrust, ININF=Industry-Inferiority, IDDIF=Identity-Identity Diffusion. Group1=both parents high, Group2=mother high, father low, Group 3=father high, mother low, Group 4=both parents low.

Table 6
Mean Autonomy-Shame Scores for Each Sex and A/C CRPBI Group

Sex	Group			
	1	2	3	4
Male	6.38	8.00	8.78	7.40
Female	5.23	5.22	5.22	8.92

Note: Group 1=both parents high, Group 2=mother high, father low, Group 3=father high, mother low, Group 4=both parents low.